

Do patients use online communications following a new breast cancer diagnosis?

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Women who reported using online communication after a new breast cancer diagnosis largely used it for email or texting with less using social media and web-based support groups, according to an article published online by *JAMA Oncology*.

Online [communication](#) could be used to enhance cancer treatment decision making and care support. Little is known about whether, or how, newly diagnosed patients with breast cancer use this technology or if it influences patient appraisals of decision making.

Lauren P. Wallner, Ph.D., M.P.H., of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and coauthors characterized the use of online communication (including email, social media and web-based support groups) in a group of women newly diagnosed with [breast cancer](#).

The analysis included 2,460 women who had complete information regarding their use of online communication and their decision satisfaction and deliberation. The average age of women at the time of the survey was almost 62, most of the women were white and most had some college education or more.

Overall, 1,002 women (41.2 percent) reported some or frequent use of online communication, most commonly for email or texting (34.7 percent), with less using [social media](#) (12.3 percent) and web-based [support groups](#) (11.9 percent), according to the results published in a research letter.

The use of online communication varied by age and education: younger women with more education were more likely to use the technology. White and Asian [women](#) also were more frequent users, the study suggests. Women who frequented online communication also were more likely to positively appraise their [decision making](#) and more likely to report a more deliberative decision and high decision satisfaction.

"The presence of variation across age, race and education reinforces that barriers exist to incorporating these modalities broadly across patients with cancer. Additional research is needed before these modalities can be leveraged to improve patient care experiences," the authors conclude.

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